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18 February 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

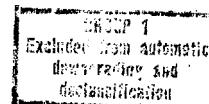
SUBJECT: MACV J2 BRIEFING ON THE MILITARY SITUATION IN  
SOUTH VIETNAM, at Headquarters Building,  
15 February 1966

A group from MACV led by the Chief of the Intelligence Operations Division of J2 (Intelligence) MACV, accompanied by a Battalion Commander from the 1st Cavalry Division, discussed the military situation in South Vietnam for about 1½ hours with the Board and guests. The MACV group was in the US to brief Ambassador Goldberg at the UN on the North Vietnamese presence in South Vietnam and brought with it a collection of weapons, documents, and interrogation reports for Ambassador Goldberg's use, which provide tangible evidence of the North Vietnamese presence. It was decided that Ambassador Goldberg would not use the collection, which was subsequently put on display in room 3D678 of the Pentagon.

2. The group seemed to feel that they are currently getting fairly good information about the VC/PAVN in South Vietnam and are consistently able to locate battallion-sized units fairly accurately.

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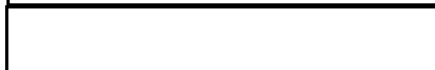
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The problem at present is not so much one of getting the information, as one of weaving the bits into usable intelligence. The recent formation of an intelligence production group by J2 (MACV) should greatly reduce this problem (at present, studies of VC/PAVN infiltration routes and supply rates are underway). Other topics covered by the J2 Group during the briefing included: infiltration, logistics, and casualty figures.

3. Prisoner interrogation and captured documents have provided considerable detail about infiltration including: routes traveled, dates of departure from North Vietnam and arrival in South Vietnam, location and length of rest stops, size of infiltration groups, other units about to move, etc. The J2 group said its estimate that the DRV was capable of recruiting, training, and sending southward a maximum monthly average of 4,500 to 5,00 men was based, in large part, on papers produced in Washington (which in turn reflected MACV's November briefing of Secretary McNamara, thus constituting a sort of circular confirmation and leaving the validity of the figures in considerable doubt). According to a chart the team displayed, the largest monthly infiltration occurred during October 1965 when 10,000 men entered South Vietnam (3 PAVN regiments comprising 5,000 to 6,000 men, with VC replacements and

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accounting  
cadre / for the rest). It usually takes a group about 90 days to move from North Vietnam to the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, although the trip can be made in as little as 60 days. Organized units usually move as groups of march units with perhaps two days between march units. Considering the length of time it takes to train and move troops and improve transportation routes, the autumn rise in VC/PAVN infiltration could represent a decision to deal a crushing blow to the ARVN in the Highlands, rather than an attempt to maintain "parity" with the US troop buildup.

5. In spite of our air attacks, the VC/PAVN forces in South Vietnam are not hampered by logistic problems. (The Battalion Commander from the 1st Cavalry said as far as he could tell, everyone shooting at him had an automatic weapon and no shortage of ammunition. He also said that he found nearly all the PAVN killed at the IaDrang-ChuPhong battle still had 200 or more rounds on their person.) The VC/PAVN forces have recently introduced a new family of Chinese-manufactured arms (including the type 47 automatic and semi-automatic assault rifle with a 30 round magazine) and the 12.8 mm antiaircraft machine gun (weighing about 390 pounds), which indicate that they have a considerable degree of confidence in their logistics system. The J2 group felt that as long as the VC/PAVN forces choose when, where, and how often they fight, they will not have a logistic problem. We can impose a logistics problem on them only by maintaining the initiative (as we have begun to do) and by carrying the fight into their base areas like War Zones "C" and "D."

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5. The J2 group was confident that VC/PAVN casualty figures reported are probably conservative. They have been very strict about casualty reports, insisting that a body be either a fighting age male or have a rifle before it can be counted. Wounded VC/PAVN are not reported. The group mentioned parenthetically that past experience indicates that on an average, for every person killed in action, there are 2 to 4 wounded.

6. Present information indicates that PAVN regiments in South Vietnam run about 2,000 men. This number includes 3 battalions of about 500 men each plus headquarters personnel, signal personnel, heavy weapons personnel, and support troops in a more or less conventional structure.

  
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